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Imagery analysis report

**New Steam Launch Catapult
Facility Under Construction
At Saki Airfield, USSR**

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NEW STEAM LAUNCH CATAPULT FACILITY UNDER CONSTRUCTION AT SAKI AIRFIELD, USSR

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1.  A new steam launch catapult facility was identified for the first time under construction at Saki Airfield  USSR, . The construction of the new steam launch catapult facility was observed adjacent to the west end of the main taxiway/parking apron at this airfield. The facility, which has been under construction since July 1977, includes a large central excavation, a small excavation which is linked to the larger excavation by a trough-like structure, a similar trough-like structure extending west from the large excavation, a runway under construction, and a dual, probable steamline which is parallel to the facility and the runway. The runway, which is 473 by 23 meters, and both trough-like structures are on the same linear axis as the major taxiway/parking apron at Saki Airfield. In addition, a new, probable arresting barrier was observed under construction at the southwest end of the runway.

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
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2.  The large excavation is 105 meters along the east-west axis and 100 meters along the north-south axis. The small excavation is 43 meters along the east-west axis and 52 meters along the north-south axis. The east trough-like structure which links the two excavations is 88 meters long and 24 meters wide. The west trough-like structure is 65 meters long and 24 meters wide. The dual, probable steamline extends approximately 1,200 meters west of the facility to a point near the shore of the Black Sea. Expansion joints were observed approximately every 170 meters along the steamline.

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3.  The new steam launch catapult facility at Saki Airfield may be similar in operation to the steam launch catapult facility at the Naval Air Test Center at Patuxent River, Maryland (Figure 2). This facility is used primarily for the structural testing of all carrier-based aircraft as well as for the preparation of airplane catapult compatibility studies for the US Navy.

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4.  Saki Airfield is 23 nautical miles west-northwest of Simferopol on the Black Sea coastal area. It supports flight operations for the FORGER training unit and the BLINDER reconnaissance regiment subordinate to Soviet Naval Aviation.

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